

REANALYZING FATALUKU'S POSTPOSITIONS AS SERIAL VERBS

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Abstract

This paper presents a new analysis of a class of words previously analyzed as postpositions in the Papuan language Fataluku. Closer examination reveals that these words exhibit verbal characteristics, such as taking verbal morphology and occupying the same grammatical slots as action verbs. Additionally, a number of words may express either events or semantically-related positional relationships, following established pathways of semantic bleaching. I argue that many verbs have acquired adposition-like meanings through their use in serial verb constructions, a common areal feature, and that their synchronic behavior is more consistent with a verbal analysis than an adpositional one.

Keywords: Syntactic categories, Grammaticalization, SVCs, Serial verbs, Adpositions, Papuan languages, Timor-Alor-Pantar, East Timor, Timor Leste, East Nusantara

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1 Introduction

This paper presents a novel analysis of words that express spatial relationships in Fataluku, a head-final Papuan language spoken in Timor Leste (Eberhard et al. 2019). In particular, I focus on a set of lexical items that previous researchers have analyzed as postpositions, such as *nā* 'be at', *malu* 'be outside', and *mucu* 'be in' (see Hull 2005; van Engelenhoven 2010; van Engelenhoven and Huber 2020). These words most often occur either clause-finally, as in (1), or before an action verb, as in (2).¹

- (1) *ina* *irin* *mucu-n-e*
1PL.X.SBJ jungle be.in-LOC-VB
'We were in the jungle.' (Com:1999)

- (2) *hin* *kuartu* *mucu* *mir-e*
REFL room be.in sit-VB
'He sat inside his own room.' (LE:Wata)

¹ I cite examples from fieldwork with a speaker code (usually the speaker's initials) and an abbreviated name of the text. The code "Elicit" indicates that an example was recorded during grammatical elicitation; the code "Mark" indicates that the example is from a translation of a short passage from the biblical book of Mark chapter 4 into Fataluku, done by a native speaker; all other codes represent texts provided by native speakers. Full metadata information for speakers and texts may be found in Heston (2015). In examples taken from published sources, I have made a few minor orthographic emendations for the sake of consistency. For instance, Hull (2005) represents /v/ with <v>, whereas most of the language consultants I have worked with prefer to represent the sound as <w>. Glosses reflect my own analyses. Abbreviations not included in the Leipzig glossing rules (Comrie et al. 2008) are defined at the end of the paper.

Though words like *mucu* 'be in' express adpositional meanings, they behave like verbs morphosyntactically, taking verbal morphology and occurring in the same syntactic positions as action verbs. In fact, a number of lexical items may express either events or semantically-related spatial relationships, such as *aci*, meaning 'see' or 'towards', and *em*, meaning 'take' or 'with (instrumental)'. I conclude that the words that are most commonly used in Fataluku to express positional relationships are better analyzed as verbs in the early stages of grammaticalization.

§2 contextualizes the present study in terms of previous work on Fataluku. §3 treats the behavior of positional verbs when they occur as the main predicate of a clause, addressing both morphological and syntactic characteristics. §4 describes serial verb constructions in Fataluku, with a focus on the behavior of positional verbs. §5 presents evidence that semantic bleaching is a source of relational meanings among verbs.

2 Fataluku

2.1 Language background

Fataluku is spoken by about 41,500 speakers in Timor Leste, an island nation located to the north of Australia, between Bali in the west and New Guinea in the east (Statistics Timor-Leste, 2015; Eberhard et al., 2019). Morphosyntactically, Fataluku is an isolating language with nominative-accusative alignment and AOV/SV word order (Heston 2015). The clitic *=a* 'SBJ', which van Engelenhoven and Huber (2020) analyze as a specifier, optionally follows full noun phrase subjects, as in (3). Constituent order is generally left-branching, though relative clauses follow their heads, as in (4).

- (3) *wani=a ipar neur-e*
 bee=SBJ dog chase-VB
 'The bees chased the dog.' (LE:Frog)

- (4) *tour=itu arapou wal-e*
 people=REL buffalo have-VB
 'people who have a water buffalo' (JL:New Year)

Genetically, Fataluku is a member of the Eastern Timor subgroup of the Timor-Alor-Pantar language family (TAP), a family that includes approximately thirty non-Austronesian languages spread across Timor Leste and nearby islands of Indonesia (Schapper et al. 2012, 2014). There have been a number of proposals of genetic relationship between the Timor-Alor-Pantar languages and Papuan languages further east on the New Guinea mainland (see e.g., Hull 2004; Ross 2005), though no consensus has yet been reached (cf. the critical review of long distance proposals made by Holton and Robinson 2014).

Fataluku has remained largely undocumented until quite recently. Campagnolo (1973) is generally recognized as the first to discuss Fataluku in any detail, though because of this work's confusing theoretical assumptions, its primary value lies in the attention it has drawn to the language. To date, there exists no full-length reference grammar of Fataluku, though three grammar sketches have been published (Hull 2005; Heston 2015; and van Engelenhoven and Huber 2020). Van Engelenhoven has also published articles dealing with derivational morphology (2009) and *give*-constructions (2010). Other resources include a Fataluku-Portuguese dictionary (Nácher 2003, 2004), a monolingual dictionary compiled by a native speaker (Valentim 2002), a dissertation and several articles on language attitudes (Boon et al. 2021; da Conceição Savio et al. 2012; da Conceição Savio 2016), and several articles on Fataluku phonetics and phonology (Stoel 2008; Heston 2014, 2019; Heston and Locke 2019).

2.2 Positional words in Fataluku

Though positional words have not been the primary focus of any previous work on Fataluku, they are discussed by Hull (2005), van Engelenhoven (2010), and van Engelenhoven and Huber (2020). These works each adopt a similar analysis, analyzing most words that express positional relationships in Fataluku as postpositions. Hull (2005: 44) also claims that "most Fataluku adpositions are of verbal origin and may also function as verbs;" however, he does not discuss the evidence or implications of this claim further.

These authors also claim that Fataluku has a set of prefixes that may be affixed to a verb to impart an additional sense of motion or direction to the verb's meaning. In Hull's (2005) analysis, these prefixes are derived from postpositions historically, though they are synchronically distinct, while van Engelenhoven and Huber (2020) claim the existence of a productive morphological process through which a postposition may be prefixed to a verb. Because of Fataluku's head-final word order, and because putative prefixes and postpositions are typically homophonous, ambiguity between the postpositional and prefix analysis is common.

In contrast to previous work, I find no compelling evidence for a distinct class of postpositions in Fataluku, nor for a set of postpositional prefixes. Instead, I see these morphemes as verbs, which often occur in serial verb constructions (SVCs). Table 1 lists the positional verbs discussed in this paper, a set chosen to be representative, though not exhaustive. For words whose semantic range includes both events and positional relationships, two glosses are given. Note that I use the term "positional verb" to refer to the set of words previous authors analyze as postpositions for expository convenience, without intending to convey that they form a unitary grammatical class. Rather, my intention is to demonstrate that many of the words used to express positional relationships exhibit clear verbal characteristics, undermining an analysis which treats them as simple adpositions.

Table 1: Positional verbs discussed in this paper

verb	positional gloss	event gloss
<i>aci</i>	'to be towards'	'to see'
<i>apur</i>	'to be with'	'to gather'
<i>cō</i>	'to be distant'	
<i>em</i>	'to use (instrument)'	'to take'
<i>hi'a</i>	'to be on'	
<i>hici</i>	'to be beside'	
<i>karu</i>	'to be near'	
<i>malu</i>	'to be outside'	
<i>mucu</i>	'to be inside'	
<i>nā</i>	'to be on'	'to breathe'
<i>tali</i>	'to be beyond; extremely'	'to pass'
<i>utu</i>	'to be in front of'	'to block'

3 Positional words occur independently as verbs

3.1 Positional verbs take the final verbal suffix

The first piece of evidence that Fataluku's positional words are not true adpositions is that they take the same morphology as action verbs. Fataluku has relatively little verbal morphology overall, but the morphology that occurs on action verbs also occurs on positional verbs. The most common piece of verbal morphology is the suffix *-e*, a morpheme that occurs on the final verb of a clause. I tentatively gloss *-e* as 'VB', for verbal. Whether a verb is able to take the verbal suffix is lexically specified: some common verbs, such as *la'a* 'to go' and *paha* 'to hit', never take the suffix. Most verbs, however, are required to take the suffix. Examples of this suffix in context are given in (5) and (6).

- (5) *wani=a ipar neur-e*
 bee=SBJ dog chase-VB
 'The bees chased the dog.' (LE:Cila)

- (6) *ana akam hai fūleh-e*
 1SG.SBJ NEG PFV return-VB
 'I won't come back.' (LE:Papapa2)

Positional verbs can also occur as the main predicate of a clause, and when they do, they take the same verbal suffix, as in (7).

- (7) *ina Com na-'e*
 1PL.X.SBJ Com be.at-VB
 'We were in Com.' (Com:1999)

Some positional verbs also take one additional element between the stem and the verbal suffix, either *-n* 'LOC', which indicates that the subject exists in the position being described, or *-p* 'MOV', which indicates motion towards the position. For instance, the root *hi'a* 'to be on' can occur either as *hi'a-n-e* 'to be located on' (8) or *hi'a-p-e* 'to get on' (9).²

- (8) *na'unuku meja hi'a-n-e*
 everything table be.on-LOC-VB
 'Everything was on the table.' (LE:Wata)
- (9) *ica eluhe=n loyasu hi'a-p-e=n Kupang mara*
 some want=SS ship be.on-MOV-VB=SS Kupang go
 'some wanted to get on a boat and go to Kupang' (Com:1999)

3.2 Positional verbs can be deverbalized

Another productive piece of morphology is the deverbalizing suffix *-(n)ana* 'DVB', analyzed in previous literature as forming either abstract nouns (Hull 2005) or adjectives (van Engelenhoven 2009). This suffix most commonly creates the meaning "something that VERBs." This suffix attaches to both prototypical verbs and positional verbs, as seen in table 2.

Table 2: Action verbs and positional verbs take the same deverbalizing suffix (Heston 2015; Nácher 2004)

word	gloss	word	gloss
<i>lauh-e</i>	'to live'	<i>lauh-ana</i>	'something living'
<i>ipil-e</i>	'to fly'	<i>ipil-ana</i>	'something flying'
<i>erek-e</i>	'to crawl'	<i>erek-ana</i>	'vine' (i.e., 'something that crawls')
<i>cō-n-e</i>	'to be distant'	<i>cō-nana</i>	'something distant, the most distant one'
<i>karu-n-e</i>	'to be near'	<i>karu-nana</i>	'something near, the nearest one'
<i>mucu-n-e</i>	'to be in'	<i>mucu-nana</i>	'the inside'

3.3 Positional verbs can be reduplicated

Another way in which positional verbs behave like action verbs is that both undergo reduplication in the same way. A common pattern in Fataluku is the reduplication of initial material corresponding to a moraic trochee; that is, either one heavy syllable or two light syllables (Heston 2015). Positional verbs and action verbs follow the same pattern of reduplication, as seen in table 3.

² While most work treats *-p* (or *-pe*) as a suffix, *-n* is amenable to two alternative interpretations. Heston (2015) analyzes *-n* as a suffix with a locative meaning, while van Engelenhoven and Huber (2020) see /n/ here as an epenthetic consonant inserted following vowel-final stems. I follow Heston (2015) here because his analysis allows for a less abstract analysis of the phonological system, though nothing crucial hangs on this point.

Table 3: Action verbs and positional verbs are reduplicated alike (Heston 2015; Nácher 2003, 2004)

word	gloss	word	gloss
<i>tifar-e</i>	'to run'	<i>tifa~tifar-e</i>	'to jog'
<i>fūleh-e</i>	'to return'	<i>fū~fūleh-e</i>	'to go and come back'
<i>ofot-e</i>	'to cut'	<i>ofo~ofot-e</i>	'to cut repeatedly'
<i>karu-n-e</i>	'to be near'	<i>karu~karu-n-e</i>	'to be rather near'
<i>utu-n-e</i>	'to be in front of'	<i>utu~utu-n-e</i>	'to be in front of'
<i>na-e</i>	'to be on'	<i>na~na-e</i>	'to be on'

3.4 Positional verbs can be questioned

Another piece of evidence against a simple postpositional analysis comes from the formation of wh-questions. Besides a full range of nominal wh- words (e.g., *ina* 'what', *uman* 'who'), Fataluku has an element *tē* 'WH' that can be used to create either indefinite or wh- forms of verbs: for instance, the verb *an-e* 'to exist' becomes *tē an-e* 'to occur in some way' or 'to occur in what way?' Positional verbs can be questioned in the same way. Examples are given in table 4 and (10) to (14).

- (10) *tē mara*
WH go
'Where are you going?' (a common greeting)
- (11) *Lospala tē wa'a~wa'ane*
Lospalos WH RDP~be.like
'what Lospalos is like' (LE:Lospalos)
- (12) *mais an=t em tē wa'an pa'i*
but 1SG=EMPH take WH be.like do
'But how can I arrange things (so that I can win)?' (JD:Cura)
- (13) *ipar en tē na'e=n ira e toto-'e i*
dog DEM WH be.at=SS water DEM see-VB COP
'Where did the dog find the water?' (LE:Papapa)
- (14) *ina tē nā la'a ina aka nawar-e*
1PL.X.SBJ WH be.at go 1PL.X.SBJ NEG know-VB
'We didn't know where we would go,' (Com:1999)

Table 4: Action verbs and positional verbs are questioned alike (Heston 2015; Nácher 2003, 2004)

word	gloss	word	gloss
<i>ane</i>	'to exist'	<i>tē ane</i>	'to occur in what way?'
<i>wa'ane</i>	'to be like'	<i>tē wa'ane</i>	'to be like what?'
<i>marā</i>	'to go'	<i>tē marā</i>	'to go where?'
<i>na'e</i>	'to be at'	<i>tē na'e</i>	'to be where?'
<i>nā la'a</i>	'to go (somewhere)'	<i>tē nā la'a</i>	'to go where?'
<i>hici</i>	'to be beside'	<i>tē hici</i>	'to be beside what?'

3.5 Positional verbs take switch reference marking

Positional verbs also interact with clause chaining in the same way as action verbs. Clause chaining is indicated in Fataluku by the presence of a clitic on the main verb of each nonfinal clause. Two clitics are used for this purpose, depending on whether the two clauses have the same subject. The clitic *=n(u)* 'SS'

occurs if the following clause has the same subject, as in (15), while $=t(u)$ 'DS' occurs if the following clause has a different subject, as in (16).

- (15) [ī nāl ī pāl o ira utu=**n**] [hai fūleh-e]
 POSS mother POSS father also water draw=SS PRF return-VB
 'Her mother and father also drew water and returned.' (LE:Papapa)
- (16) [tawar hin familia ī foto=**m** ini mesen-e=**t**] [ina toto]
 3PL REFL family POSS photo=take 1PL.X.NSBJ show-VB=DS 1PL.X.SBJ see
 'They showed us their own family's photos and we looked at them.' (LE:Xmas)

Positional verbs can be chained in the same way, as in (17) and (18); as with other verbs, the choice of clitic depends on the positional verb's subject.

- (17) [waka iwi na-'e=**n**] [hai fūleh-e]
 deer there be.at-VB=SS PRF return-VB
 'The deer was there, then went away.' (Nico:Frog)
- (18) [ana la'a a nālu aci=**tu**] [tawa macenu=**m** a nina]
 1SG.SBJ go 1SG.NSBJ mother see=DS 3SG food=take 1SG.NSBJ give
 'I will go to my mother and she will give me food.' (Capell, 1962)

4 Positional verbs and other verbs occur in same slots in serial verb complexes

While the verbal characteristics of positional verbs are most clearly seen when they occur as the main predicate of a clause, in discourse (especially narrative discourse), they frequently precede other verbs. Any analysis of these words' behavior must account for their occurrence in this position, as exemplified in (2), repeated as (19) below.

- (19) hin kuartu mucu mir-e
 REFL room be.in sit-VB
 'He sat inside his own room.' (LE:Wata)

I analyze examples such as (19) as having a serial verb construction (SVC), consisting of two verbs. In this section, I demonstrate that the construction in question does meet established criteria for being an SVC, and that positional verbs and action verbs are serialized in the same way.

4.1 Background on serial verb constructions

Serial verbs constructions have been the subject of considerable attention in the linguistic literature (e.g., Aikhenvald 2006; Bisang 2009; Durie 1997; Haspelmath 2016; Senft 2004). Areally, they are well-represented in mainland Southeast Asia, New Guinea, and the Pacific, and they are common in the language family to which Fataluku belongs (Aikhenvald 2006; Klamer 2018; Schapper 2009). Crosslinguistically, they are often used to express positional relationships and are a common source of adpositions diachronically (see e.g., DeLancey 2005; Matthews 2006; Durie 1988; Lord 1993; Givón 1999).

The exact definition of serial verbs remains a matter of some debate, but most definitions appeal to a list of prototypical characteristics like the following, given by Defina (2016:649; see also Durie 1997; Aikhenvald 2006):

- They consist of a sequence of two or more verbs which function independently as verbs in monoverbal clauses.
- They are monoclausal, with all the intonational properties of a monoverbal clause.
- There is one tense, aspect, mood, and polarity value that is shared by all verbs. This is normally marked on one verb but is sometimes marked on all.
- There are no markers of subordination, coordination.

- The verbs share at least one core argument.
- There is only one grammatical subject.
- The construction refers to a single event.

Since intonational behavior and eventhood have received some criticism as diagnostics for morphosyntactic behavior (see e.g., Defina 2016; Haspelmath 2016), in the discussion that follows, I focus on the other, more well-established criteria.

4.2 No coordination or subordination

In Fataluku serial verb constructions, two independent verbs occur in a single clause, without any makers of coordination or subordination, as in (20) and (21). The verbs share a grammatical subject, and only the final verb in the construction may take verbal morphology.³

- (20) *ina meja poron cuar-e*
 1PL.X.SBJ table encircle sit-VB
 'We sit in a circle around the table.' (LE:Xmas)

- (21) *mu'aharan uni cura enen jampata nere ciel-e*
 morning one rat DEM road follow step-VB
 'One morning, that rat was walking down the road.' (JD:Cura)

Examples (22) and (23) show that *poron-e* 'encircle' and *nere* 'follow' can serve as full predicates. *Poron-e* 'encircle' belong to the class of verbs that take the suffix *-e* 'VB' when serving as a full predicate, while *nere* 'follow' never takes the suffix.

- (22) *tawa poron-e*
 3SG encircle-VB
 '(They) encircled him.' (JL:Mark4)
- (23) *na'uwara loyasu ī, touri o tawa nere*
 and boat COP all also 3SG follow
 'And there were boats, and they all also followed him.' (JL:Mark4)

The verbs of an SVC are typically adjacent, as in (20) and (21), though this is not a requirement, as seen in (24).

- (24) *em lē mara*
 take house go
 '(They) took (it) and went home.' (LE:Papapa)

Positional verbs occur in the same construction. It is very common for a positional word to precede a verb that expresses an event in an SVC, as in (25). Two positional verbs may also be serialized together, as in (26).

- (25) *ina hai malu wah-e*
 1PL.I.SBJ PFV be.outside leave-VB
 'We ran away.' (Palu:Indo)

³ Note that this is a somewhat different view of SVCs in Fataluku than that of van Engelenhoven and Huber (2020). Under their analysis, if a verb requires the suffix *-e* 'VB' to occur as an independent predicate, this suffix must also be present on the verb when it appears in an SVC.

- (26) *tahi afarika hici mu'a na-'e*
 sea side be.beside land be.at-VB
 'And they were beside the sea on the land.' (LE:Mark)

4.3 Negation has scope over the entire complex

An important criterion for monoclausality is negation, since negation applies within the clause (Haspelmath, 2016). The scope of negation is illustrated in (27), where negation has scope not over a single verb, but over the entire serial verb complex *nere nawar-e* 'understand' (literally 'follow know').

- (27) *ia akam rata e nere nawar-e?*
 2PL.SBJ NEG saying DEM follow know-VB
 'Do you not understand this saying?' (JL:Mark)

A single negator also serves to negate complexes involving positional verbs, as in (28).

- (28) *afa tifar-e akam a tali moh-e*
 1PL.I.SBJ run-VB NEG 1SG.NSBJ be.beyond run-VB
 'When we run, you will not overtake me.' (JD:Cura)

Notice that the relationship between *tali* 'be beyond' and *moh-e* 'pass' is different than that holding between *tifar-e* and the other verbs in (28). The verb *tifar-e* 'run' takes its own verbal morphology (the suffix *-e* 'VB') and shares no arguments with the other verbs (taking as its subject 1PL.I instead of implied 2SG), indicating that it is not a member of the serial verb complex. As would be expected, the scope of the negator does not extend beyond clause boundaries, and the verb *tifar-e* is unaffected by the shift in polarity value.

4.4 Entire complex takes same value for aspect

Serial verb complexes also take a single marker of aspect, which affects the interpretation of the entire complex. This is illustrated with the perfective marker *hai* 'PFV' in (29) and (30) for action verbs and (31) and (32) for positional verbs.

- (29) *ma'ar ia hin faru hai uku=m mura laku*
 person DEM REFL shirt PFV completely=take remove release
 'That man took off all his clothes.' (LE:Nwind)

- (30) *moco tupur en hai nere~nere ciel-e*
 child girl DEM PFV RDP~follow step-VB
 'The girl followed it.' (LE:Papapa)

- (31) *iwi'it wani hai malu wā~wāh-e*
 then bee PFV be.outside RDP~leave-VB
 'Then the bees swarmed out.' (LE:Cila)

- (32) *ana hai tali moh-e*
 1SG.SBJ PFV be.beyond run-VB
 'I will outrun (him).' (JD:Cura)

4.5 One marker of subordination

Another indication of monoclausality is that entire complex is subordinated together, taking only one marker of subordination. Example (33) shows the relativization of an SVC, while (34) shows an SVC that is subordinated in a biclausal causative construction.

- (33) *ana wata=t [ele ā rohon somon ma'u] iwini'i*
 1SG.SBJ coconut=REL [RELPRO 2SG.SBJ be.past carry come] DEM
 'I am the coconut that you brought in.' (spoken by a magical coconut) (LE:Wata)
- (34) *uman=it fa'i=t [ma'ar iwin hin lau=m mura laku]*
 who=REL make=COMP [person DEM REFL clothes=take remove release]
 'whoever makes this man take off his clothes.' (LE:Nwind)

Examples (35) and (36) show relativization of SVCs with positional verbs.

- (35) *ana meja=t [ele kinamoko=a u'a mir-e] iwi naler-e*
 1SG.SBJ table=REL [RELPRO child=SBJ be.under sit-VB] DEM knock-VB
 'I knock the table which the child sits under.' (LE:Elicit)
- (36) *ana ma'ar=it [ele tom tali lōhai] iwi paha*
 1SG.SBJ person=REL [RELPRO Tom be.beyond high] DEM hit
 'I hit the person whom Tom is bigger than.' (LE:Elicit)

5. Semantic bleaching

In sum, the morphosyntactic evidence does not support the distinction previous analysts have posited between verbs and postpositions in Fataluku, since the words most often used to express positional relationships behave like verbs and occur in serial verb constructions. Even in their semantics, we find no obvious way to differentiate between verbs and postpositions, since a number of words may express either positional relationships or more prototypically verbal meanings.

One example is the verb *em-e* 'take', discussed in some detail by van Engelenhoven (2010) and Klammer and Schapper (2012). This verb has developed several additional functions, including instrumental 'with', a common development crosslinguistically (Heine and Kuteva 2002). Example (37) shows *em-e* 'take' as a full predicate. In example (38), *em-e* is serialized, but maintains its original sense, while in (39), *em-e* is used to introduce an instrument. Example (40) shows a typical give-construction, in which *em-e* 'take' is used to indicate the patient. Especially when used to introduce an instrument or patient, *em-e* is often phonologically reduced and cliticized, as *=(i)m*.

- (37) *ina ali la'a macen em-e*
 1PL.X.SBJ again go food take-VB
 'We go out again for food.' (Palu:Indo)
- (38) *ira iwi utu=n em lē mara.*
 water DEM draw=SS take house go
 'They drew that water and took it home.' (LE:Papapa)
- (39) *hikari=t [ele ana em wata atar-e]*
 knife=REL [RELPRO 1SG.SBJ take coconut cut-VB]
 'the knife I cut the coconut with' (LE:Elicit)
- (40) *tawa macenu=m a nina*
 3SG food=take 1SG.NSBJ give
 'She will give me food.' (Capell 1962)

Of the verbs discussed here, *em-e* 'take' is by far the most grammaticalized. It shows significant phonological reduction and semantic bleaching, especially in the context of give-constructions. *Em-e* is interesting because it exhibits characteristics of a verb, as in (38), postposition, as in (39), and case marker, as in (40), though it is not a prototypical representative of any of these categories. I include it here as an

example of ongoing grammaticalization in Fataluku, though I leave more detailed analysis of its synchronic behavior for future research.

A somewhat more straightforward example is the verb *aci* 'see', which often occurs in serial verb constructions with the meaning 'to, towards'. Compare (41) and (42).

- (41) *aficalafur* *ūkani* *aci*
crocodile one see
'He saw a crocodile.' (LE:Aficalafur)

- (42) *tawa* *hin* *nāl* *ho* *hin* *pāl* *hai* *aci* *ta'a*
3SG REFL mother and REFL father PERF see talk
'She talked to her mother and father.' (LE:Papapa2)

Cross-linguistically, semantic bleaching from a verb meaning 'see' to some sort of locative expression is extremely common; this development has been reported for instance in Korean, Bihari, Halia, and Tamil (Heine and Kuteva 2002).

The verb *apur-e* 'gather' also has the meaning 'be with' (Nácher 2003), and it has been analyzed as a postposition in the past (cf. Hull 2005). Example (43) illustrates *apur-e* 'gather' as the main predicate of the clause, while (44) shows it in a serial verb construction.

- (43) *aca* *apur-e*
chicken gather-VB
'gather chickens (nightly)' (Nácher 2003)

- (44) *afa* *familia* *apur* *mac-e*
1PL.I.SBJ family gather eat-VB
'We eat with our family.' (JL:Fish)

While I have not found other examples of precisely this development, it is quite reasonable, given similar semantic pathways in other languages, such as 'follow' > 'with' (Ainu, Chinese), 'accompany' > 'with' (Chinese), 'take' > 'with' (Twi, Nama) (Heine and Kuteva 2002).

It is not clear whether other words expressing positional relationships, such as *u'a* 'be under', *malu* 'be outside', and *mucu* 'be in', had more prototypically verbal meanings historically, or whether their positional meanings are stable through time. More work is needed both on Fataluku lexicography and on reconstructions of Proto-Eastern Timor. Nevertheless, examples in which the same word may express either actions or semantically-related positional relationships further undermines an analysis treating postpositions and verbs as distinct grammatical categories in Fataluku. This data rather supports an account in which certain verbs have developed positional meanings through time, a process Klammer (2018) has shown to be very common among Fataluku's relatives in the Timor-Alor-Pantar language family.

6. Conclusion

To sum up, the words most commonly used to express positional relationships in Fataluku are better analyzed as verbs than as postpositions. They exhibit the same morphology as action verbs, including clause-final verb marking, deverbalization, and reduplication. They also occur in the same syntactic positions as other verbs—either as the main predicate of a clause or as a member of a serial verb construction. Several of the words Fataluku uses to indicate positional relationships may also be used to express events, which further weakens claims that they form a major grammatical category distinct from verbs.

This analysis of verb serialization has important implications for the analysis of Fataluku grammar. Serial verb complexes are extremely common in narrative texts, and analyzing positional elements as verbal in nature, rather than as strictly adpositional, has important implications for understanding Fataluku syntax. Another valuable direction for future work would be to examine potential differences in the syntactic behavior of different positional verbs and their implications for diachronic development. Historical work examining the behavior of cognate items through the history of the family is another promising direction,

work which would yield a more complete picture of the syntactic organization of these languages through time.

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Abbreviations

DS	different subject clause linker
DVB	deverbalizer
I	inclusive
LOC	existence in a relation
MOV	movement into a relation
RELPRO	relative pronoun
RDP	reduplicant
SS	same subject clause linker
SVC	serial verb construction
TAP	Timor-Alor-Pantar (language family)
VB	verbal
X	exclusive
WH	wh- forming morpheme

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